

Chapter 7

The Future

Looking Ahead

The unpredictable nature of the post-Cold War world requires that the Army's top priority remain readiness. The Army Transformation plan represents the sweeping measures to accomplish the Army vision of maintaining "strategic dominance across the entire spectrum of operations" throughout the period to 2020. To this end, the Army must become more responsive, deployable, agile, versatile, lethal, survivable and sustainable. All Transformation efforts focus on these seven goals. The process by which this will be achieved is fundamental, and has been likened to taking a complex computer down to its basic components and rebuilding it into a far more capable system, while never taking it off-line. Clearly, this is a tremendous challenge in itself.

Transforming the Army

Army Transformation is taking place through the parallel development of three key elements: the *Legacy Force*, the *Interim Force* and the *Objective Force*. Through approximately the first decade of the new century, they follow separate paths, merging during the second decade to create the final product—a "new" Army (see figure 13).

Legacy Force

Efforts involving the Legacy Force focus on improving the major weapon systems the Army currently has in its inventory, principally ground combat vehicles such as the Abrams tank, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, armored fire support and combat support vehicles. Popularly known as

the "heavy force," comprising Army mechanized and armored divisions, these units' equipment will be continually upgraded with product improvements to existing equipment. The Legacy Force will continue to be the Army's primary warfighting maneuver force for the foreseeable future.

Interim Force

The Interim Force is both a revised force for today and, in several ways, a leap-ahead organization. The plan is to use available technology to reequip brigade-size units (Interim Brigade Combat Teams, or IBCTs) to adapt them to meet many of the Army's missions. This will enable them to deploy more quickly than the heavy forces, but with more combat power, ground mobility and protection than the Army's light forces (airborne, air assault and light infantry units). The Interim Force will also be used to develop many of the doctrinal and training concepts for the Objective Force.

Objective Force

The Objective Force will combine the best aspects of the heavy, light and interim forces. It will be equipped with the Future Combat System (FCS), a "system of systems" with four primary functions: direct fire, indirect fire, battlefield transport of infantry and sensing.

Technological advances that will allow the FCS to be far lighter—and therefore much more deployable, mobile and agile—include the development of electromagnetic propellant systems for projectiles, directed-energy weapons, precision missiles, networked fire control, ceramic

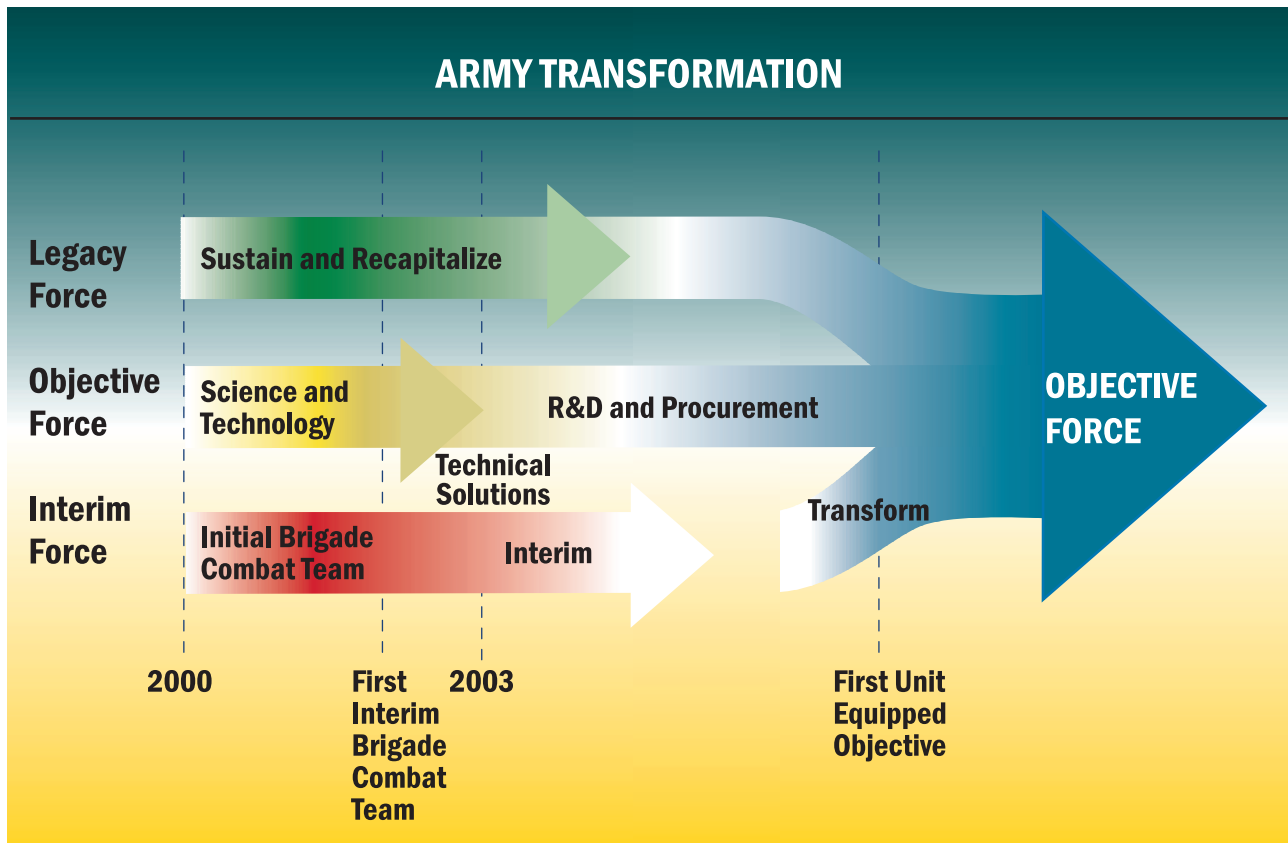


Figure 13. Army Transformation

armor, reflective armor, advanced electric propulsion systems, fuel cells and robotics. All of these developments and more are aimed at creating an FCS that will be 70 percent lighter and require 50 percent less space on Air Force or Navy transports than current systems, such as the Abrams tank.

As technological advances blur the distinctions between heavy and light forces, the driving factor in the design of the Objective Force will be the retention of the capability for victory on the battlefield and success in other operations across the full spectrum of missions.